May 23, 2011

Gina L. Kirkland
SC Department of Health and Environmental Control
Water Quality Standards Coordinator
Bureau of Water
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Re: Comments on Notice of Drafting for R.61-68 and R.61-69 related to the bacteriological indicator for the protection of recreational uses

Upstate Forever and the SC Coastal Conservation League appreciate the opportunity to participate in the revision to the bacteriological indicator for recreational uses for the SC water quality standards. Our organizations represent over 7,000 individuals throughout South Carolina and collectively work to promote and protect water quality and quantity in all waters of the State.

We support the Department's effort to replace the current indicator of fecal coliform with *E. coli*. The change to *E. coli* is consistent with EPA recommendations because *E. coli* accurately and reliably predicts the occurrence of gastroenteritis after exposure to polluted waterways as a result of recreational activities.

We respectfully submit the following comments regarding South Carolina Regulations 61-68, *Water Classifications and Standards,* and 61-69, *Classified Waters,* in response to the Notice of Drafting for this change. These comments are consistent with the comments submitted for the 2010 Triennial Review by eleven conservation organizations that represent over 24,500 individuals throughout the State.

1. **As part of the change to *E. coli*, the Department should establish a standard for all waterbodies that it is protective of frequent full body contact recreation.** The overriding goal of the Clean Water Act is for ***all waters*** to be fishable and swimmable. Establishing different standards based on the frequency of recreational use of a waterbody would result in a number of waterbodies with having levels of *E. coli* too high for recreation. In addition, the process to determine and designate the frequency of use of each waterbody in the State would be unnecessarily expensive and time consuming and would likely result in waterways being under-protected.
2. **In establishing the *E. coli* standard, the Department should use an illness rate of 0.5% in order to ensure that public health is protected to the greatest extent**

possible. A lower illness rate would ensure better protection of public health. In no event should the standard use a rate higher than the EPA approved rate of 0.8%.

3. **The Department should establish geometric mean and single sample maximum standards for *E. coli* for the State that are uniform throughout the year and are based on critical conditions during the warmer months**. Seasonal variation would result in a serious risk to public health and an inability to support recreational uses during certain times of the year. Rather, recreational uses should be fully protected throughout the year.
4. **The Department should phase out the use of fecal coliform-based standards as quickly as practicable**. We would support either an immediate change to the new *E. coli* standard or a gradual shift to the new standard during which time the State would have both a fecal coliform and *E. coli* standard. However, the Department should have an ultimate goal of phasing out the use of fecal coliform and relying only on *E. coli* based standards within 2 years. Of the 30 states that use *E. coli* based standards, only seven (7) still continue to use fecal coliform in addition to *E. coli*, and several of these states are transitioning to *E. coli* only.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We look forward to continuing to work with the Department and other stakeholders on this change to the water quality standards.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or comments.

Best,

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